



THE LIBERTY "76" BOYS OF 76

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NEW YORK, JUNE 21, 1901.

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THE LIBERTY BOYS SUSPECTED; OR TAKEN FOR BRITISH SPIES. BY HARRY MOORE.



"They are undoubtedly British spies!" said the soldier, pointing to Dick and Bob. "We are not British spies!" replied Dick; "we are like yourselves, patriots!"

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CHAPTER I.

TAKEN FOR BRITISH SPIES.

"Well, Dick, how much farther do you think it is to the patriot encampment?"

"I don't know, Bob."

"I should think we would reach it before nightfall."

"I hope we may do so, Bob."

It was early Fall in the year 1777.

It was the afternoon of a beautiful day.

Two youths of perhaps nineteen years were riding along a road leading northward from Albany, in the State of New York.

The youths were Dick Slater and Bob Estabrook.

Dick Slater was the captain of a company of youths known as "The Liberty Boys of '76."

Bob was a member of the company, and was Dick's righthand man, and best friend.

They were indeed chums, having grown up from children together.

Their parents had lived on adjoining farms, near Tarrytown, N. Y., ever since the youths could remember.

These two youths had made names for themselves during the year that they had been in the patriot army.

In addition to having proven themselves fighters, they had done good work in the way of carrying messages, and in spying.

The youths were well-mounted.

They were riding at only a moderate gait, however.

They were not sure enough of the road to ride fast.

They had never before been so far North.

Presently they entered a hilly, rough region.

There was considerable in the way of timber, but it was in the main of a scrubby character.

They were not far from the Hudson River, however.

This accounted for the hilly, rough character of the country.

They rode onward.

They were talking and laughing, when suddenly they met with a surprise.

A ringing command was heard:

"Halt!"

The next instant a score of soldiers appeared in the road in front of the youths.

The youths reined up their horses.

They heard a noise behind them, and looked back.

A score or more of soldiers were there!

The soldiers had worn faded uniforms of Continental blue.

This proved to the youths that the soldiers were patriots.

In that case, they thought they had nothing to fear.

"Up with your hands!" ordered one of the soldiers.

He was a tall, rather fierce-looking fellow, and was evidently in command of the force.

The youths obeyed the order.

They elevated their hands.

"This is unnecessary," said Dick, quietly, as the officer approached.

"It is, eh?" the man remarked.

"Yes."

"Why is it?"

"For the reason that we are friends."

"Oh, you are?"

There was doubt and sarcasm in the man's tone.

"We are."

"Friends of King George, I s'pose!"

The patriot officer grinned in a leering fashion as he said this.

Some of his men laughed.

They seemed to think their leader had said something smart.

Dick shook his head.

"No, your friends; not the friends of King George," said Dick. "I acknowledge no man king!"

The fellow leered again.

"Very pretty!" he said, "the sentiment is all right. The author of the sentiment, however, is under suspicion."

"Why so?" asked Dick.

"Oh, there's a good reason for it."

"Why so?"

"You want to know?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, I guess I'll tell you."

"Do so!"

"All right; it is this way: We received word, yesterday, that a couple of British spies were on their way up here to spy on the patriots, and we came down to meet them."

"Oh, that is it?"

"That is it!"

"And you think we are the British spies in question?"

"I'm sure of it!"

The fellow spoke in a decided tone.

Dick looked at Bob.

There was dismay and disgust in his expression.

The look was duplicated on Bob's face.

To be taken for British spies was enough to fill them with a feeling of disgust.

They had not been expecting anything of that kind.

It took them by surprise.

"You are mistaken in your suspicions," said Dick. "We are not British spies."

The officer smiled unbelievably.

"You are not?" he asked.

"We are not."

The man was evidently unconvinced by Dick's denial.

"Who and what are you, then?" he asked.

"My name," said Dick, "is Dick Slater, and my companion is Bob Estabrook. We are members of a company of patriots known as 'The Liberty Boys of '76.'"

The man still smiled in an unbelieving manner.

"I never heard of you," he said; "and if you are members of such a company, where are the rest of the men?"

"We left them down below."

"Oh, you did?"

"We did."

"Whereabouts down below?"

"In Pennsylvania."

"In Pennsylvania?"

The man looked at the youths in a searching manner.

"Yes."

"Whereabouts in Pennsylvania?"

"Near Philadelphia."

"Near Philadelphia, eh?"

"Yes."

"Let's see; Washington's army is down there," the man said, in a meditative tone, seemingly more to himself than to the youths.

"Yes, my 'Liberty Boys' are with Washington's army," said Dick.

The officer looked searchingly at Dick and then at Bob.

"You don't mean to say you have come from there?" he asked.

Dick nodded.

"I do mean to say that very thing!" he declared.

The man shook his head.

He seemed unable to believe the statement.

"Why have you come, then?" he asked.

"We are the bearers of a message to General Gates."

"The bearers of a message to General Gates!"

The man seemed greatly surprised.

He looked at the youths in a doubtful manner.

"Where is the message?" he asked. "Let me see the document."

Dick shook his head.

"I cannot do it," he said.

"Why not?"

"I would not show it to you, if I had it, as, being intended for General Gates, it must be seen first by him, and no one else; but I haven't it."

"You haven't it?"

"No."

"Where is it, then?"

The look of doubt and unbelief was again on the officer's face.

"I destroyed it."

Dick spoke calmly, coolly.

"You destroyed it?"

The man's tone expressed surprise and incredulity.

"I did."

"Why did you destroy it?"

"To keep the redcoats from getting hold of it."

"To keep the redcoats from getting hold of it?"

The officer was evidently greatly mixed.

He seemed scarcely to know what to think of Dick and Bob.

"Yes, to keep the redcoats from getting hold of it," said Dick; "we were in danger of being captured, and I obeyed the orders of General Washington, and destroyed the message."

"Then you have no message to deliver to General Gates, after all!"

"Oh, yes!"

"But you just said you destroyed it!"

"So I did."

"Then how can you have one to deliver?"

"I have a verbal one to deliver. In fact, I was informed of the contents of the message, and told to destroy it in case we were threatened with capture, and then deliver the message verbally."

Dick spoke calmly, frankly.

There was the impress of truth in his expression.

But the patriot officer was skeptical.

"I don't believe a word of what you have said!" he declared.

"You don't?"

Dick's demeanor was calm and unruffled.

There was an angry look on Bob's face, however.

He was a hot-headed youth, and did not fancy hearing Dick spoken to in this fashion.

"No, I don't believe anything you have said," the man reiterated.

"It doesn't matter," said Dick; "if you will take us to General Gates, that will be all that is necessary. What you believe or do not believe, is of no consequence."

"That's the way to talk, Dick!" said Bob; "I think the fellow is exceeding his authority. He ought to have taken us to General Gates at once, and not stopped here to ask us a whole lot of questions."

The man frowned.

He glared at Bob in an angry manner.

He might as well have saved himself the trouble, however.

He could have no effect on Bob.

The youth gave the officer look for look.

"You are insolent!" the man said.

"No; I'm only telling what is the truth!"

The officer turned to his men.

He beckoned, and several advanced to his side.

Then he turned to the youths once more.

"Dismount!" he ordered.

His tone was fierce.

The youths obeyed.

They knew it would be useless to resist.

They did not care to do so, anyway.

They knew they would soon be taken before General Gates.

And then all would be all right, they thought.

"Bind their hands!" the man ordered.

"We haven't anything to bind them with, captain," said one of the soldiers.

"That's so; well, it isn't necessary, anyway. They can't get away. Form a hollow square, and keep them in it."

This was done.

Dick and Bob said nothing more, at the time.

They decided that it would be useless.

It would serve no good purpose.

This officer would believe nothing they would say.

So they might as well save their wind.

They would wait until taken before General Gates.

The party now moved forward, up the road.

The soldiers kept the youths within the hollow square, and watched them closely, to see that they did not make an attempt to escape.

They kept on up the road, a distance of perhaps a mile.

Then a house was reached.

It was a farmhouse, such as were to be found in that portion of the country in those days.

The party drew up in front of the house.

"Bring the prisoners into the house," ordered the captain. "We will see what General Gates will do with the British spies!"

The officer strode toward the house as he gave the order.

Four of the soldiers seized Dick and Bob by the arms, and led them toward the house.

"Don't try to make your escape!" said one of the men; "it will be the worse for you, if you do!"

"Don't fear!" said Dick, scornfully; "we have no desire to escape. We wish to see General Gates, and would not leave till we have done so, even if you were to set us free."

The men grunted out something unintelligible.

It is probable that they did not believe Dick.

In another moment they were inside the house.

The officer led the way along the hall, and about midway from the front to the back, knocked on a door.

"Come in!" called a voice.

The officer opened the door, and entered.

The four conducted Dick and Bob into the room, also.

The youths gave a quick glance around the room, as they entered.

At the farther side, seated behind a desk, was a patriot general.

"That must be General Gates," thought Dick.

In this he was right.

The officer was General Gates.

As the youths came to a stop in front of the general, he looked at them searchingly.

Then he looked toward the officer who had entered the room ahead of the youths.

The officer had doubtless already made some brief statement, for he now pointed toward the youths and nodded triumphantly.

Then General Gates looked back toward the youths once more.

He looked them over, from head to foot.

"They are undoubtedly British spies!" said the soldier, still pointing to Dick and Bob.

"We are not British spies," said Dick; "we are, like yourselves, patriots!"

CHAPTER II.

IN THE PRESENCE OF GENERAL GATES.

"Of course they would claim that they are patriots, to save their skins!" said the fellow who had commanded the party that captured the youths.

General Gates made a gesture for the officer to keep silent.

Then he addressed himself to the youths.

"You claim you are patriots?" he asked.

"We are patriots!" replied Dick.

"Have you any proof of the truth of your words?"

"We didn't suppose it would be necessary to bring proof, other than the message which we were the bearers of, from General Washington."

The general looked interested.

"You are the bearers of a message from General Washington?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Ah! Where is it?"

"We were chased, surrounded, and almost captured by some redcoats, sir, as we were coming here, and in accordance with instructions from the commander-in-chief, we destroyed the message."

"That's the same story he told when I captured them, General Gates!" said the officer, sneeringly; "it is undoubtedly a falsehood!"

Dick turned on the fellow with a look that made him quail.

"You talk altogether too much!" Dick said, in a scathing tone. "I am talking to General Gates—I suppose it is General Gates?—and when your opinion is wanted, it will be asked for!"

"Yes, I am General Gates," said the officer behind the table, with rather a pompous air.

Then he made a gesture to the other.

"Be silent," he said; "I will talk to these young men, and settle the matter for myself."

"That's the way to do business!" said Bob, with a grin at the mouthy fellow who had caused them to be made prisoners. "Now, will you be quiet!"

It was a hard matter for Bob to keep quiet, sometimes, and this was one of the times.

Dick nudged Bob.

It was a signal for him to remain silent.

General Gates frowned.

He looked at Bob with a look of disapproval.

Then he turned his gaze on Dick.

"You say you destroyed the message?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Humph! You say you came from General Washington?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where was he when you left him?"

"At a place called Whitemarsh."

"Whitemarsh, eh?"

"Yes, sir. It is not more than a dozen miles from Philadelphia."

"His army is there?"

"Yes, sir."

"Humph!"

It was plain that General Gates was puzzled.

He did not know whether to believe the story of Dick or not.

"How came you to destroy the message?" he asked, presently; "I should have thought you would have done that only as a last resort."

"That is what we did, sir. We thought we would not succeed in escaping when we destroyed the message. Still, I doubt if we should have destroyed it, even then, had it not been for the fact that we knew the contents of the message, and had been instructed by the commander-in-chief to deliver the message verbally in case we were forced to destroy it."

The general started.

"Ah! then you know the contents of the message?"

Dick nodded.

"Yes, sir; the commander-in-chief himself informed us of the contents. He did it purposely."

General Gates looked at Dick searchingly.

"Indeed?" he said; "General Washington must have a great deal of confidence in you!"

Dick smiled.

"Well, I think I can say with truth that he does place a great deal of confidence in us," the youth said, quietly.

"Humph! What was the gist of the message you speak of, young man?"

"This: He said for me to tell you to take your time to go slow and sure, and work carefully to bring about the defeat and capture of Burgoyne and his army; that he (Washington) will keep Howe and Cornwallis cooped up in Philadelphia, and make it so that they will not send any troops to the aid of Burgoyne."

General Gates looked at Dick searchingly.

It was evident that he hardly knew what to think.
The young stranger certainly seemed to have a good knowledge of what was going on.

Then he would have the same knowledge if he were a British spy, for that matter.

The officer who had been in command of the party that had captured Dick and Bob fidgeted, and looked eagerly and anxiously at his superior officer.

It was evident that he feared General Gates would be won over by Dick's plausible story.

General Gates was not yet satisfied, however.

He was a man naturally suspicious.

"Who are you two young men?" he asked.

"My name is Slater, Dick Slater," replied Dick; "and my companion, here, is Bob Estabrook."

The youths watched General Gates' face.

They wished to note whether or not the mention of who they were had any effect on him.

It did not, they were sorry to see, seem to have any effect.

The general shook his head.

"I have never heard of you," he said.

"You are rather young to be in the army, are you not?" he asked, after a moment.

"We are nineteen years old, sir," replied Dick.

"Nineteen?"

"Yes, sir."

"How long is it since you joined the army?"

"About fifteen months, sir."

"Humph!"

"They are pretty smooth story-tellers, General Gates," said the officer, who had kept quiet as long as it was possible for him to keep quiet.

"There is no story about it," said Dick, with quiet dignity; "every word we have uttered is the truth, and only the truth."

Suddenly Bob spoke up.

"Have you ever heard of 'The Liberty Boys of '76'?" he asked.

Both General Gates and the officer started slightly and looked at each other quickly.

Then General Gates said, slowly:

"At first I thought that I had heard of some such persons; but on second thought, I must say that I have never heard of them."

"Nor have I," said the officer who had been responsible for the capture of the youths.

Bob said no more.

He looked at Dick with an expression of mingled disappointment and disgust.

"What about the 'Liberty Boys of '76'?" asked General Gates.

Bob shook his head.

"Nothing," he replied.

"There must be something about them—something which you wished to speak of."

Bob shook his head, and made no audible reply.

When he wished to be silent, nothing could make Bob talk.

The general looked inquiringly at Dick.

"Will you explain?" he asked.

"There is nothing particular to explain," said Dick; "there is, down in the main patriot army, a company of young fellows like ourselves, who are known as 'The Liberty Boys of '76,' that is all. We thought that perhaps you might have heard of them."

The general shook his head.

"No," he said; "but why did you speak of them?"

"We are members of that company of 'Liberty Boys,' that is why," said Dick, quietly.

"And he is captain of the company!" said Bob, indicating Dick.

General Gates looked at Bob, and then at Dick.

There was a speculative look in his eyes.

Dick felt sure that he was somewhat inclined to believe the two youths were what they claimed to be.

The officer who had been instrumental in capturing the two did not wish the general to believe they were patriots, however.

He seemed to be satisfied that they were British spies.

It appeared that he was unable to get that idea out of his mind.

"That's a likely story, General Gates," he said; "the idea of him being a captain of a company! It is absurd!"

"You're a fool!" said Bob, quickly and hotly. "He is captain of the company of 'Liberty Boys,' as I have said, and you'll find that such is the case, before you are through with this affair."

"Don't mind him, Bob," said Dick, quietly; "it isn't worth while wasting words on him."

General Gates made gestures to the officer, and to Bob and Dick.

"Silence, all!" he ordered.

"Keep him still, and I'll keep still," said Bob.

Dick could not help smiling, serious as was the situation of himself and comrade.

It might turn out to be a serious matter, if they were unable to satisfy General Gates of the fact that they were patriots.

Should he make up his mind that they were British spies, as he seemed inclined to do, they might even be hanged or shot.

Dick signalled Bob to keep silent.

He did not think it policy to anger either the general or his subordinate officer.

The general was silent for several moments.

He looked down at the floor.

He was evidently pondering.

He seemed puzzled.

Dick watched him anxiously.

Presently General Gates looked up.

He looked at Dick.

"Young man," he said, "your story may be true, and it may not. You have no proof that it is, and I have no proof that it isn't. This being the case, I shall be forced to hold you prisoners for the present. You may be British spies, and it would not do to let you go free, if that is the case."

"No, of course it would not do, if we were British spies," agreed Dick; "but I cannot for the life of me see why you should think we are British spies. If we were really British spies, we should have been more careful. We would not have been riding boldly along, in broad daylight, on the road leading direct to the patriot encampment. We would have approached secretly. I have done the work of a spy on many occasions for General Washington, and know something about such matters."

General Gates shook his head.

"It is hard telling what you might do, if you are British spies," he said; "I shall have to hold you prisoners, for a time, at least."

Dick was disappointed.

He frowned.

He wished to be on his way back to the patriot army, down in Pennsylvania as soon as possible, and to be detained here would be anything but pleasant.

Bob was very angry.

The officer who had made them prisoners in the first place was delighted, however.

He grinned in an extremely pleased manner.

Dick and Bob both felt as if they would like to hit the fellow a blow in the mouth, and smash that grin all over his face.

"He may be a patriot, all right," thought Dick; "but even so, I don't like the fellow."

"Take them to the guard-house, Jordan," ordered General Gates; "and see to it that they do not escape."

"I'll see to it, General Gates!" was the reply. Then he signalled to the four men who had hold of the youths.

"Lead them away!" he commanded.

CHAPTER III.

SPOILING THE REDCOATS' PLANS.

The men obeyed.

The youths were conducted from the room, and out the house.

They had no idea where they were to be taken.

They were not long left in doubt.

They were conducted toward the timber, the edge of which was about two hundred yards distant.

They entered the timber.

They were conducted along a path a distance of perhaps fifty yards.

While being conducted along this path, Bob had given Dick a peculiar, significant, questioning look.

It said as plainly as words could have expressed it, "Show us how we try to escape from our captors?"

Dick shook his head.

There were but the four men holding them.

The youths could have escaped, they were sure.

But Dick did not wish to do so.

Had they broken loose from the men and escaped, General Gates would have believed they really were British spies.

Dick did not wish the general to think this.

He and Bob had come to the general bearing a message from the commander-in-chief.

Dick wished this message to have weight with the patriot general.

If he was to become satisfied that the youths were British spies, he would, of course, believe the message was all fiction.

So Dick decided to remain, even though they had to remain as prisoners.

He felt sure that sooner or later it would be proven that they were what they claimed to be—patriot messengers.

It was clear that Bob was disappointed.

He was impulsive.

He did not like the way he and Dick had been treated.

To his way of thinking, they would have been wholly justified in escaping, and shaking the dust of this inhospitable region off their feet.

When they had penetrated perhaps fifty yards into the timber, the little party came to a log cabin.

It was a strongly-built affair.

A sentinel stood at the door.

"There must be other prisoners in there," thought Dick. This proved to be the case.

There were four British soldiers in the cabin.

They were taking life as easy as possible.

They were playing cards.

They looked up as Dick and Bob were shoved into the one big room of the cabin.

"Hello!" greeted one; "who are you fellows?"

"Oh, nobody in particular," replied Dick.

"Humph! You needn't be so exclusive!" the soldier said, and then he went ahead with his card-playing.

"They have a right to be exclusive," said one of the soldiers who had brought Dick and Bob; "they are spies, while you fellows are merely common soldiers."

"Oho! spies, are they?" remarked the redcoat, giving the youths a sharp look.

"Then they'll probably hang!" remarked another, cheerfully.

"I'm not afraid that we will hang before you do!" retorted Bob, promptly.

The patriots laughed.

Then the other three gave their comrade the laugh.

"He got back at you, Harney," said one.

"I noticed it," was the dry reply.

"Oh, well; we're practically all in the same boat, so we couldn't quarrel," said another.

"You are right about that," said one of the patriot soldiers; "you are all in the same boat, and will probably all hang, so there isn't any reason why you should quarrel."

Then the patriot soldiers closed the door, and fastened on the outside.

The four redcoats kept on playing cards.

Dick and Bob withdrew to the farther end of the room.

By speaking in low tones, they could converse without being overheard by the redcoats.

"Well, what do you think of this, anyway, Dick?" asked Bob.

There was such a look of disgust on Bob's face that Dick could not keep from smiling.

"Oh, I can't say that I like it, Bob," he said; "however, I think it will soon work out all right."

"I don't see how it is going to do it."

Bob was evidently dubious regarding this.

"Well, I'll tell you how, Bob: There must certainly be

some one in the patriot ranks here who knows us by sight."

Bob started.

"That's so," he said; "there surely must be!"

"If we could see anyone who knows us, or rather, if anyone who knows us should see us, we would be all right, Bob."

Bob was silent a few moments.

Then the dubious look came back on his face.

"I don't believe General Gates would believe a man if he said he knew us," he said; "he would call the soldier a traitor, and put him in here, along with us!"

Dick smiled again.

"Oh, I hardly think so, Bob," he said.

"Well, he is the most skeptical man I ever saw, anyway!" Bob declared.

"Oh, I don't blame him, Bob. He must be very careful, you know."

"That is true, of course; but I don't think he would have ever doubted us for a moment, if those fellows hadn't captured us and brought us into camp, prisoners."

"I think you are right about that."

"I know I am! And that fellow, Jordan, seemed to take a dislike to us. He was bound that General Gates should not believe our statements regarding who we were and where we came from."

"He did seem to be prejudiced against us."

"I should say so!"

The youths talked for half an hour or so.

Then the four redcoats stopped playing cards, and turned their attention to their new comrades.

They seemed to wish to be friendly, so Dick and Bob met them half way.

The result was that they were soon talking freely.

Dick was more than willing to be friendly with the fellows.

He thought it possible that he might secure some information which would be of benefit to General Gates.

He asked the four questions in a careless, seemingly aimless manner.

The questions were calculated to draw out information, however, in case the fellows were possessed of any.

Bob saw what Dick was doing, and he had not much to say.

He preferred to let Dick do the talking.

He answered questions directed to him, and that was about all.

And these he answered in monosyllables.

The afternoon was soon gone.

Evening was at hand.

"It's about supper time, I should say," presently remarked one of the redcoats.

"Judging by my feelings, it is," said another; "I'm hungry as a bear."

"And so am I," from another.

"And I," from the fourth; "I hope they'll bring us plenty of good food, for we'll need it, to strengthen us for to-night's work, eh, fellows?"

There was a significant inflection to the last speaker's voice which attracted Dick's attention.

He was sure it meant something.

The manner of the other three convinced Dick of this, also.

They gave their comrade a warning look, and then glanced significantly toward Dick and Bob.

The speaker laughed, carelessly.

"What's the difference?" he asked; "they're friends and comrades, aren't they? And we'll have to take them into our confidence, won't we?"

"Yes, but—there's no hurry," from another; "let's wait till the time comes."

"Bah! what's the difference? The time is almost here, anyway."

"Oh, keep still!" said another of the fellows, sharply.

Dick was convinced, now, that something was up.

He wished that the fellows had told himself and Bob what was in the wind, so that he could have given warning when the man came to bring their supper. As it was, he would be unable to say anything, for the reason that he had no idea what the men had reference to.

Not much more was said for awhile.

The six maintained almost absolute silence, and waited.

As one remarked, "I'm too hungry to talk!" the others applauded.

Presently steps were heard outside.

"He's coming!" cried one.

There was a fumbling at the door.

Then the door swung open.

A soldier entered.

He was carrying a large basket.

He placed this on the floor, and quickly withdrew.

It was still light enough so that the men could see to eat.

They placed the basket on a rough table, and gathered around it.

Room was made for Dick and Bob.

"Come ahead," invited one of the redcoats; "you mustn't be backward, for if you are, you will probably starve to death."

Dick laughed.

"Oh, we're not so very backward," he said.

There was plenty of food, such as it was.

There was not much variety.

The prisoners did not care for this, however.

They were hungry, and hunger is the best sauce.

By the time they had satisfied their hunger, they were in almost complete darkness.

They could see each other dimly, and that was all.

"Do you not have a light?" asked Dick.

"We don't want a light," was the reply, in a significant tone of voice.

Then Dick remembered what had been said before the supper was brought, and he felt confident that it would not be long before they would be let into the secret of the meaning of the words which had been spoken.

It soon turned out that Dick was right in thinking thus.

The four men gathered about Dick and Bob, and told them the secret.

"We expect to make our escape to-night," said one.

"How?" asked Dick.

"We have succeeded in digging a hole—a sort of tunnel—rather, down underneath the wall of the cabin."

"But we didn't notice any dirt anywhere," said Dick. "What have you done with the dirt?"

"It is under the bunk, in the corner."

"Oh, then that is the reason we didn't notice it."

"Yes; if it had been where you would notice it, the fellow who brings the food would have noticed it."

"True; have you got the tunnel completed?"

"No; we have an hour's work, digging, yet."

"Oh, that's it?"

"Yes."

Dick said no more.

He was thinking.

What should he do?

This was the question he asked himself.

As for himself, he had no desire to escape.

He did not wish to leave until he could do so openly and without going under a cloud.

He must convince General Gates that he and his comrade were really patriots, and that they were the bearers of a message from General Washington, as they claimed they were.

But how was this to be accomplished?

Dick made up his mind that he must not let the four comrade prisoners succeed in getting out and away.

If he were to be instrumental in preventing this, warning the patriot guard outside, this would, he

sure, go a good way toward proving that he and Bob were patriots, and not British spies.

Were they British spies, they would certainly welcome the chance to escape, along with the other four prisoners.

Dick thought the matter over, carefully.

He decided to warn the guard outside.

He waited till the four men went to work to finish digging the tunnel.

Then he slipped to the door, and rapped on it.

There was no notice taken of the rapping, from the outside.

There was from within the cabin, however.

"What was that?" one of the redcoats cried.

In some manner, they became suspicious.

"I believe it was one of those two fellows who were put in here this afternoon!" said one.

"Maybe they were put in here to spy on us!" said another, in an angry, suspicious voice.

"That's right;" from another; "maybe they aren't British soldiers at all! Maybe they're rebel spies!"

"Let's grab the cusses, and choke them till they are senseless!" cried another, fiercely.

Dick rapped again, this time louder than before.

He knew he had but little time to spare.

In a few moments he and Bob would be struggling in the grasp of the four redcoats.

"What's the matter in there?" called out the guard outside.

"Quick! Get help and surround the cabin!" called out Dick; "the four redcoats in here have tunnelled under the wall, and will make their escape, unless you—"

"Curse you, we'll fix you for that!" hissed a voice in Dick's ear, and at the same instant he felt himself grasped by strong hands.

At the same time he heard the sound of struggling close at hand, and realized that Bob was in trouble, also.

CHAPTER IV.

THE STRUGGLE IN THE DARK.

There were four of the redcoats against Dick and Bob.

There were the odds of two to one to contend against.

It would be an unequal conflict.

At least, so it would seem, on the face of it.

It was not so unequal as one might think, however.

The redcoats were full-grown, and stout fellows, as or-

dinary men go, but at the same time, Dick and Bob were uncommon youths.

They were young, strong, active and supple.

They were quick and active, and as slippery as eels.

So when the redcoats seized the youths, they soon discovered that they had all they could attend to.

"Give it to them, Bob!" called out Dick.

"I certainly will, if I can, Dick!" was the reply, in a panting tone.

Then the struggle went on fiercely.

The redcoats were very angry.

They were furious.

They realized that their scheme to escape would now be frustrated.

All that remained for them was to get revenge.

They were determined to have revenge, if such a thing were possible.

They soon found it was going to be a difficult task, however.

The youths were hard to handle.

The redcoats did not have things all their own way, by any means.

Dick and Bob were skilled in the art of the wrestler.

The redcoats were not.

The result was that the fellows were thrown to the floor, one after another, with great force.

Each time a redcoat went down, he was jarred so that he was for a brief space rendered incapable of doing anything.

As soon as he gathered his scattered wits, however, he would scramble to his feet, and renew the combat.

It was possible for the two youths to make the combat fairly equal, by practicing these tricks on their opponents; but it is doubtful if they could have triumphed ultimately.

While the combat was still raging, there came the sound of fumbling at the door.

Then it was opened suddenly.

A party of soldiers stood at the doorway.

One held a lighted lantern.

This he held up, so as to light up the interior of the cabin.

The six men, struggling there on the floor, were revealed to view.

"Here! Here! What does this mean?" called out the man with the lantern.

He stepped across the threshold as he spoke.

A number of the soldiers followed.

"It means that these four redcoats are mad because we

exposed their scheme to escape," replied Dick, quietly; "and they are trying to take pay out of our hides."

"Humph! well, they don't seem to have succeeded to any very great extent," was the dry remark.

"They haven't, for a fact," replied Dick, quietly; "I judge they would have got the better of us presently, however."

The four redcoats, seeing there was no use to try to continue the combat, let go their hold of the youths, and stepped back.

They glowered angrily at the youths, however.

It was evident that they would have liked very much to injure them.

"You said they were intending to escape by means of a tunnel under the wall," the soldier with the lantern said, as he flashed the light around the room; "where is the tunnel?"

"Under the bunk in the corner, yonder," replied Dick, pointing.

A blanket hung over the edge of the bunk, in seemingly careless fashion.

The soldier lifted the blanket.

The tunnel was revealed to view.

The dirt which had been removed in making the tunnel, was packed under the bunk, at either side of the tunnel.

The tunnel itself was, of course, a very small, primitive affair.

It was barely large enough to permit the passage of a man's body.

There would be but little room to spare.

"Ah, ha!" the patriot soldier exclaimed; "they were in a fair way to have made their escape, sure enough!"

"We would have succeeded in escaping, had you not put those cursed rebel spies in here!" one of the redcoats growled.

The patriot looked surprised.

He looked at the speaker, and then at Dick and Bob.

"They're not rebel spies," he said, nodding toward the youths.

"No?" in a tone of unbelief.

"No."

"What are they, then?"

"They are redcoats like yourselves, and spies, too."

"Not a bit of it!" sneeringly; "you can't fool us that way! If they were British, they would not have betrayed us, would they?"

The patriot looked puzzled.

"It doesn't seem reasonable," he said.

"We did all we could to prove to General Gates that we

are not redcoats," said Dick, quietly; "I hope this will be sufficient to open his eyes."

The patriot with the lantern seemed to be puzzled.

He looked at Dick and Bob in an undecided manner.

Then he turned to his companions, who had come with him in response to the summons from the guard.

"Bring ropes, and bind the arms of these fellows," he ordered. "We will have to fix them so they won't be able to do any more digging."

A couple of the soldiers left the cabin, and were gone several minutes.

When they returned, bringing the necessary ropes, the four redcoat prisoners were bound.

They did not attempt to resist.

They knew it would do no good.

They glared angrily at Dick, however, and threatened that if ever they got the chance, they would get even with him.

"No doubt of it!" said Dick, quietly; "but I don't think I shall give you the chance."

The patriot who had given orders so far now turned and gave his attention to Dick and Bob.

"I don't know what to do with you two fellows," he said, frankly.

"Do all you can to make General Gates believe that we are just what we are—patriots," said Dick, quietly.

"But I don't know that you are," dubiously.

"See here," said Dick, "isn't it plain enough? Doesn't this little affair prove it?"

"How does it prove it?"

"In this way: If we were British spies, we would wish to escape, would we not?"

"I should think so."

"Well, we had a chance to escape. By keeping quiet we could have gone with these four redcoats. We could have escaped, easily. We did not do it; instead, we gave the alarm, and were the means of keeping those fellows from escaping. We would not have done that if we were British spies, surely!"

The patriot shook his head.

"I should not think so!" he agreed.

"Of course we wouldn't. Anyone of ordinary intelligence would know that."

The man did not know what to do, and said so.

"I guess I shall have to keep you prisoners till morning, anyway," he said, finally; "then we will see what General Gates has to say."

"Very well," said Dick, quietly; "you are the one to decide. Where will we be kept?—in here?"

The man nodded.

"There is no other place to keep you," he said.

"I hope you won't bind our arms."

The man pondered a few moments.

"No," he said, presently; "we won't bind your arms. We will place a guard around the cabin, and if you should attempt to escape, you would be shot."

Dick laughed.

"There is no danger that we will be shot!" he said.

The patriot soldiers now withdrew, and closed the door and fastened it.

The four redcoats glared at Dick and Bob.

"Oh, if our hands were only free!" panted one of the fellows.

"But they aren't free," grinned Bob.

"Which is lucky for you!" savagely.

Bob laughed.

"Oh, I don't know so well about that!" he said; "we held our own with you very well, I think, before the men came and interfered."

"We would soon have had you at our mercy."

"Perhaps so; perhaps not."

The youths were forced to bandy words with the angry redcoats for awhile, and then, when the latter relapsed into silence, as they did after a time, the youths withdrew to the end of the cabin, and conversed in low tones for awhile. Then they went and lay down in a couple of the bunks, and were soon asleep.

They were awake bright and early next morning, and were ready for their breakfast when it was brought to them.

The four redcoats did not seem to have a very good appetite.

Their disappointment on account of having failed to escape had spoiled their appetites.

Dick asked the fellow who brought the food a few questions, but he did not seem to be able to answer the questions satisfactorily.

Dick stopped in disgust.

"I guess we will have to take it easy, and await developments, Bob," he said.

"It looks so, Dick," replied Bob.

"I hope you will be kept here till you go out!" growled one of the redcoats, with a fierce look.

"Thanks!" said Dick, calmly.

"Much obliged!" grinned Bob.

This made the redcoat madder than ever.

He realized that the youths were making fun of him. Yet he was helpless; he could do nothing, and this was what made him so angry.

Dick and Bob did not feel very good themselves.

They were patriots.

There were no stronger, more true-hearted patriots to be found than they; yet here they were, penned up with four redcoats, held as prisoners and suspected of being British spies.

It was vexatious, to say the least.

But they could not help themselves.

There was no use of fretting.

The youths did not, therefore fret or fume to any great extent.

They were rather philosophical.

They took matters as easy as it was possible for them to do.

It was about the middle of the forenoon when a soldier came and opened the door.

He beckoned to Dick and Bob.

"Come," he said.

"Very glad to do so!" said Dick.

"That's right!" agreed Bob. And then he asked:

"What is up?"

"General Gates sent me for you," was the reply.

The youths accompanied the soldier to the house occupied by General Gates as headquarters.

They were conducted into the house, and to the room they had been in the day before.

General Gates was seated at his desk.

He looked up as the youths were ushered in.

"Ah! good morning!" he greeted.

"Good morning!" replied the youths in unison.

The general looked at the two keenly.

"What is this story I hear regarding you two young men?" he asked, abruptly.

"I don't know, General Gates," replied Dick, quietly.

"Some of my men have been telling me that you prevented the escape of the prisoners in the guard house last night; is that true?"

"Yes, that is true," replied Dick.

General Gates seemed puzzled.

He was evidently at a loss to know what to think of the two youths.

While he was looking at them, in this undecided fashion, the door opened and the orderly announced:

"General Arnold!"

As soon as he heard the name, Dick gave a start.

He knew General Arnold very well—had met him several times in New York, and he knew that Arnold would recognize him.

He turned and faced the newcomer.

Yes, it was the General Arnold whom he knew.

Arnold paused, and looked at Dick in amazement.

"What! can it be possible!" he exclaimed; "Dick Slater, the captain of the 'Liberty Boys,' and the champion spy of the Revolution!"

General Gates turned pale.

"You know him, then?" he almost gasped.

"Indeed I do!" cried Arnold, and he shook Dick's hand heartily.

CHAPTER V.

DICK PROMISES TO ASSIST GATES.

It was plain that the general was stumped.

He seemed not to know what to think or say.

He stared at the youths with an interested air.

"Then these two youths are really what they claimed they were!" he finally exclaimed.

"You may be sure they are, General Gates!" said Arnold, quietly. "I happen to know that General Washington places implicit confidence in them—has every confidence in the world in them."

"Then they really are messengers from the commander-in-chief!" half murmured General Gates.

"If they say they are, you may be sure of it!"

"Well, well! And I had them in the guard house all night held as prisoners!"

"You did!"

General Arnold was greatly surprised.

"Yes."

Arnold turned and looked at the youths.

"That was rather an unpleasant experience," he said.

"Oh, we didn't mind the physical inconvenience," said Dick; "it was being suspected of being British spies was what we disliked."

"I should judge that was rather unpleasant, to such strong patriots as you two are!"

Then Arnold turned to General Gates.

"You were saying yesterday, general, that you wished you could learn the intentions of Burgoyne, that you could find out what he was going to do."

Gates nodded.

"So I did—and so I should," he said.

Arnold nodded.

"Exactly," he said; "well, you have the opportunity of doing this, now."

General Gates looked surprised.

He looked puzzled, as well.

"How?" he asked. "I don't understand you."

Arnold pointed to Dick.

"You see this young man?" he remarked.

Gates smiled.

"Yes, I see him."

"Well, then, you have your eyes on the champion spy of the Revolution! This modest-looking young man has done more successful work as a spy among the British than all other four spies!"

General Gates was evidently interested now.

He stared at Dick in a way that showed this.

"Well, well! I should never have thought it!—not that you do not look like a brave, shrewd youth," he added hastily; "but you are so young for such work."

Dick smiled.

"Sometimes my youth has been of great benefit to me in the work of a spy," he said, quietly; "the British, like yourself, thought that I was not dangerous owing to my youth. They could not suspect me of being a spy, on that account. Hence I was often enabled to secure valuable information that a grown man would have failed of securing."

"I see!" said General Gates.

"And, now, general," said Arnold, "if you wish to find out what the British are going to do, I would suggest that you get Dick here to go among them as a spy. If there is any such thing as securing this information, he will cure it!"

General Gates started.

He turned his eyes on Dick, and looked at him quiringly.

"Would you attempt it?" he asked, eagerly.

He waited anxiously for the youth's reply.

Dick pondered a few moments.

Then he turned toward Bob.

"What do you think, Bob?" he asked; "do you think General Washington would care if we delayed and did something to aid in bringing about the defeat and capture of Burgoyne's army?"

Bob shook his head.

"I shouldn't think he would care. You know better than I, though, Dick."

"Of course he wouldn't care!" said General Arnold; "he would say do it, in a jiffy! You need have no fears about that score, Dick."

Dick was silent a few moments, during which time he gazed at the floor in a deep study.

Then he looked at General Gates.

"I will consent to do what you wish, General Gates," said, "on one condition."

"And that?" eagerly.

"Is, that you write a statement to the effect that

requested me to do the work, and give it to me, to give to the commander-in-chief."

"Of course I'll do that!" Gates said, promptly. "I shall be glad to do so."

"Very well; then I will make the attempt to enter the British lines and do the work which you wish done."

"Good for you, Dick!" cried General Arnold, slapping Dick on the back.

Then to General Gates he said:

"You may consider the work done, general! Dick will find out what Burgoyne intends doing, you may be sure of that!"

"Don't be too sure!" smiled Dick; "I will find out, however, if such a thing is possible."

"And to you, all such things seem to be possible!—at any rate, so General Washington told me, when speaking of you, my boy!"

Dick flushed with pleasure.

It always pleased him to know that the commander-in-chief was pleased with him and his work.

"I have been very fortunate," Dick said, modestly; "it has been more good luck than work, perhaps, and for that reason I hope you will not raise the hopes of General Gates too high. I might have to disappoint him, after all."

"I don't think there is much danger," with a confident smile. "Had it been by good luck that you succeeded, you would have scored some failures ere this. Luck doesn't stay by one always. It deserts one at a time when he least expects it."

"And perhaps this is the time when my good fortune is going to desert me."

Arnold shook his head.

"There is no fear of that!" he declared, confidently.

General Gates drew a sheet of paper out of a drawer of the table at which he was sitting, and, taking up a quill, wrote rapidly for a few minutes.

When he had finished, he read what he had written, and handed it to Dick.

"Read that, and see if it is satisfactory," he said.

Dick took the paper, and read what the general had written.

It was addressed to the commander-in-chief of the Continental army, and was a simple statement to the effect that Dick Slater, the boy spy, had consented, at his request, to remain a few days and go into the lines of the British and make an attempt to learn their plans.

"That is satisfactory," said Dick, quietly.

"Good! I thought it would be."

Dick folded the paper and handed it to Bob.

"You keep that for me, Bob," said Dick; "I don't care about having any incriminating documents on my person when I go into the British lines. If they should capture me, it might insure my being hung or shot."

"True," agreed General Gates.

Arnold nodded.

"Yes, it is best to have nothing of that character on your person," he said.

"When will you make the attempt to enter the British lines?" asked General Gates.

"To-night."

"To-night, eh?"

"Yes."

"Well, that will be safest and best, no doubt, It would be a dangerous and difficult matter to enter in the day-time."

"It would be next to impossible, sir."

Then Dick began asking questions regarding the whereabouts of the British.

General Gates and Arnold answered the youths questions, and presently Arnold said:

"I'll tell you what you had better do, Dick: Come on up to my headquarters. They are farther to the north, and nearer to the British lines. There is a hill a short distance from my headquarters, from the top of which you can see the British encampment. You can go up there, and take a survey of the British encampment, and of the surrounding country, and then, when you start out to-night, you will know what you are doing, and where you are going."

Dick's eyes lighted up.

"That is just the thing!" he exclaimed; "that will suit me, exactly!"

"I'm going back up to my headquarters in a few minutes," General Arnold said; "wait, and you can go right along with me."

"Very well; we'll wait outside," said Dick.

"You will report to me, just as soon as you get back from your trip into the British lines?" asked General Gates.

"Certainly, sir," replied Dick.

"Don't delay an instant anywhere else, but come straight here!"

There was intense earnestness in General Gates' tone and air.

"Of course I shall do as you say, sir."

Dick happened to glance at General Arnold, and he saw a peculiar, half-scornful smile on the officer's face.

Dick was puzzled by the smile.

"I wonder what that meant?" he asked himself.

Then he dismissed the matter from his mind.

Somehow he got the impression, however, that the relations between the two officers were not the most cordial in the world.

And in this surmise Dick was correct.

There was bad blood between Generals Gates and Arnold.

Gates was a bigoted, self-important man, not a great general, by any means, but firmly convinced in his own mind that he was.

He was not a fighter.

He was neither good at commanding or at fighting, but had been advanced to his present position as commander of the northern forces through a series of circumstances which it is unnecessary to enumerate here.

Suffice it to say that real merit was not the main thing in his advancement.

General Arnold, on the other hand, was a good commander and one of the best fighters that ever set foot on a battlefield.

He earned, and was given the sobriquet of "The Fighting General."

His men loved him.

They would follow him anywhere.

Arnold was noted for headlong valor; for dash, vigor and fierceness in battle.

He was a hurricane fighter, and woe to the enemy that stood in the path of Arnold, the reckless, and his brave followers!

There was bad blood between Generals Gates and Arnold on account of what had taken place at the first battle of Freeman's Farm.

In this battle, Arnold had gone down, with only a portion of the army, and had completely demoralized the British.

He stated that, had Gates sent more men to his aid, he could have whipped the British.

This made Gates angry.

He had suspended Arnold from command of any portion of the troops, but Arnold had taken his place at the head of the army, in the second battle of Freeman's Farm, and had done wonderful work.

He had been directly responsible for the victory of the patriots.

So now the dashing young officer scarcely knew his standing.

He occupied his quarters, but did not know whether or not he was entitled to command any portion of the army.

He had come down to see Gates, for the purpose of finding out.

Dick and Bob made their way out of doors.

They waited till General Arnold appeared.

Dick, who was a good judge of faces, saw that Arnold was not pleased.

His interview with Gates had evidently not proven satisfactory.

Arnold forced a smile to his face when he saw the youths, however.

"Well, are you ready to go with me?" he asked.

"We are," replied Dick.

They walked away up the road.

Arnold was pre-occupied.

He walked slowly.

He was evidently thinking deeply.

The youths walked quietly along beside the officer.

They made no remarks.

"With such a man in command of the army of the North, I fear for the success of the Cause!" suddenly exclaimed Arnold aloud.

Then Arnold started, and, looking at the youths, laughed in a somewhat nervous and apologetic manner.

"I trust you will repeat nothing that you have heard me say?" he half asked.

"Certainly not!" replied Dick.

"There has been plenty of provocation, my boys," Arnold said, half musingly; "plenty of provocation!"

He said no more until they reached his headquarters.

Then he said:

"You are welcome to remain here in my headquarters as long as you like."

"Thank you!" said Dick; "my comrade will remain with you, but I shall leave as soon as it is dark."

"Very well."

Then Arnold pointed to a hill, the top of which was perhaps a quarter of a mile distant.

"From the top of that hill you can see the British encampment," he said.

"Thank you for the information," said Dick; "we will go up there, and take a survey of the situation at once."

"Be careful how you expose yourselves; the top of the hill is within musket-shot of the British picket lines, and some of the redcoats are excellent shots."

"We will be careful."

Then Dick and Bob made their way up to the top of the hill.

CHAPTER VI.

DICK AS A TARGET.

"I see the British encampment, Dick!"

"Yes, there it is, Bob!"

The youths had made their way to the top of the hill. They had taken up positions behind trees. They were now peering cautiously around the trees. Half a mile away, seemingly, could be seen the white tents of the British.

Dick took a careful survey of the lay of the land.

He intended to make his way into the British encampment that night, if possible, and would need to have some knowledge of the lay of the country, to aid him in making his way there through the darkness.

"I don't think I will have much trouble in getting into the encampment, Bob," said Dick, after taking a careful survey.

"Think not?"

"I think it will be an easier matter than it has proven to be on a number of occasions when I have tried the same thing. The lay of the land is in my favor."

"I'm glad to hear you say that!"

Presently Dick began climbing the tree behind which he had been standing.

"What are you doing that for, Dick?" asked Bob. "Want to get a better view?"

"Yes," was the reply. "I wish to see the entire encampment, if possible."

Dick climbed steadily upward, and a few minutes later occupied a commanding position in the top of the tree.

He found that he had a splendid view.

He could see the entire encampment.

Every tent was within the range of his vision.

He could see the soldiers walking about.

He remained up in the tree perhaps fifteen minutes.

Then he began making his way down.

He had proceeded only a short distance, when there sounded the sharp crack of a musket.

Dick uttered an exclamation.

"What's the matter, Dick?" called out Bob, anxiously; "did they hit you?"

"No," was the reply, "but I heard the bullet whiz past my ear!"

Dick had been a little bit careless, and in climbing down had exposed his person in such a manner that a picket had caught sight of it and had fired.

"You had better hurry down, Dick! There will be a whole gang firing at you in a minute!"

This proved to be the case.

The man who had caught sight of Dick, and who had fired the shot, evidently told his companions what he had seen, for soon the crack! crack! of muskets could be heard in rapid succession.

The bullets kept whistling through the tree top at a rapid rate.

Some of them came dangerously near to Dick.

It was anything but pleasant to be a target in this fashion.

Bob was greatly excited.

He feared his comrade would be killed, or seriously wounded.

"Be careful, Dick!" he kept calling out; "keep your body sheltered behind the body of the tree!"

"I will," replied Dick; "I am doing so."

There was no doubt about it, however; Dick was in great danger.

He realized this.

The body of the tree, at the height at which he now was, was not very large.

It was not as large as Dick's body.

So it was not large enough to furnish him a safe shield.

At any moment he might be seriously wounded.

Dick set his teeth and climbed downward as rapidly as possible, however.

If he could get down to where the body of the tree was of a goodly size, he would feel comparatively safe.

Crack! crack! crack!

Whiz! whir! whistle!

The bullets flew all around the daring youth.

Certainly his lucky star was in the ascendent.

It seemed almost a miracle that he was not killed or seriously wounded.

His clothing was cut by bullets a number of times.

His skin was grazed on one or two occasions.

But still he escaped serious injury.

If anything, Bob was much more excited than was Dick.

He danced up and down, as if he were standing on a hot platter.

He kept his eyes constantly on his comrade.

Doubtless he expected to see Dick tumble down to the ground, a limp, lifeless mass at any moment.

He kept yelling cautions to his friend.

Between times he anathematized the redcoats in general and the picket sharpshooters in particular.

He was tempted to rush out and show himself, and thus draw the fire of the pickets.

He knew, however, that this would be suicidal, as the pickets would be able to bring him down, easily.

He knew, also, that Dick would be angry if he were to do anything of the kind.

So he restrained the impulse, and kept out of sight behind the tree.

He watched his comrade eagerly, anxiously.

As Dick continued to climb steadily downward, Bob's hopes grew.

He began to think that after all Dick might escape.

Presently the youth had progressed far enough down the tree, so that his body was almost completely sheltered.

Bob drew a long breath of relief.

Naturally, Dick felt better, also.

He began to breathe more freely.

It had been a close shave; but he believed he would escape without being wounded now.

The sharpshooters kept up their work, however.

They seemed determined to kill the "rebel" if such a thing were possible.

They had already lost their best opportunity, however.

If they could not kill him when they had a good chance at him, they were not likely to succeed in doing so when he was well sheltered.

Still, a bullet might strike him, and inflict a serious wound.

Dick would not feel safe until after he had reached the ground.

As he could climb down with greater rapidity, now, without being in so much danger of exposing himself to the shots of the enemy, Dick was not long in getting to the ground.

"Thank goodness, you're still alive, Dick!" said Bob; "I expected that you would be shot full of holes!"

"My clothing is shot full of holes, Bob," laughed Dick. "I am happy to say, however, that my body is, as yet, intact."

"It isn't the fault of the redcoats, then!"

"It is, and it isn't. They would have filled me full of holes, if they could have done so, and in that respect they are not to blame; they could not hit me, however, so it is their fault, after all."

"Yes, I guess you are right."

Bob peered around the tree.

"I'd like to get a shot at one of those fellows!" he said, grimly; "I'd like to see if I couldn't do better shooting than they did!"

Dick laughed.

"You are rather bloodthirsty, Bob," he said; "come, let's go back to camp."

Crack!

One of the pickets had caught sight of Bob's face, and had fired.

The bullet knocked Bob's hat off.

"That's a gentle hint to keep your head back, Bob!" laughed Dick.

"You may call it a gentle hint," retorted Bob; "but if I could get a bead on the fellow who fired the shot, I would do my best to make him understand that I don't appreciate his hints!"

"I have no doubt you would, Bob. I wouldn't mind getting a shot or two at the fellows myself!"

Dick looked down at his clothing significantly.

His coat was torn in a number of places by the redcoats' bullets.

Suddenly Bob uttered an exclamation:

"Great Guns! Dick! here come some of them!" he cried.

Dick looked, and sure enough, he saw half a dozen of the redcoats rushing up the hillside.

The redcoats evidently understood that there were not more than one or two patriots in the timber on the top of the hill, and they were coming up in the hope of making a capture.

Dick compressed his lips.

His face took on a grim expression.

"Let's stand our ground, Bob!" he said in a low, firm voice.

"I'm with you for doing so, Dick!"

Bob was eager.

"We have four shots, Bob, between us, and we ought to be able to put a stop to that charge."

"I think we can do so, Dick!"

The youths drew their pistols.

Each had two.

Holding the weapons in readiness, the youths peered around the trees and waited.

They were old hands at all kinds of warfare.

They were veterans.

The approach of half a dozen redcoats was not sufficient to shake their nerve in the least.

They had faced greater odds than that, many a time, and in an open field, too.

When the redcoats were about twenty paces distant, the youths leveled their pistols.

They took good aim and fired.

Crack! crack!

The two reports sounded so close together as to sound like one report, slightly elongated.

Two of the approaching redcoats threw up their hands and fell to the ground.

The remaining four paused, and stared up toward the trees with a look of consternation on their faces.

Crack! crack!

Down went two more!

This was more than the remaining two could stand. They gave one frightened glance toward the point from whence had come the deadly shots, and then turned and fled.

The youths had won the fight with ease.

Dick looked across at Bob.

"Did you shoot to kill, Bob?" he asked.

"No, did you?"

"No; I'm glad you didn't, old man. It isn't pleasant to think that you have caused the death of a man."

"It would seem worse in a case of this kind, than when in battle, Dick."

"Yes."

The four who had fallen were wounded, pretty severely, without doubt, but the youths hoped that not one of them was fatally hurt.

They turned and made their way back down the hill, talking in the direction of the patriot encampment.

"What was going on up there?" asked General Arnold, when the youths put in an appearance; "it sounded as if there was a small-sized battle raging. I was on the point of sending reinforcements."

The youths laughed.

"We didn't need any help," Dick said.

And then he explained.

"I supposed that was what was the trouble," said Arnold, when Dick had finished.

Then he asked:

"You got a good look at the redcoats' encampment?"

"Oh, yes," replied Dick; "I got a good look at the encampment, and also at the surrounding country."

"That is good; you will know what you are about, when you start out to-night."

"Yes; I will know which way to go."

Dick and Bob took things easy during the rest of the day.

There was nothing they could do, so they felt that they had a right to take things easy.

About the middle of the afternoon General Arnold came where the youths were sitting, and sat down beside them.

He seemed to be in a communicative mood.

"General Gates and I had some words, after you left the room this morning," he said.

"Indeed?" remarked Dick.

"Yes; he doesn't fancy me much, anyway, and he has been angry at me ever since the first battle of Freeman's Farm. If he had sent me assistance that day I could have whipped the British as thoroughly as we whipped them at the second battle of Freeman's Farm."

"Indeed?"

Dick hardly knew what to say.

Arnold looked away into the distance for a few moments, and then turned his eyes on the youths.

"I'll tell you something," he said; "it is this: The British are in the worst kind of trouble. Our men have them surrounded, and they can't get away. They know it, too."

Dick and Bob were surprised.

"Is that so!" exclaimed Dick.

"Why doesn't General Gates close in on them, and make them surrender, then?" asked Bob.

"I'll tell you why: He's afraid!"

There was infinite scorn in the tone of Arnold's voice.

"Afraid?" remarked Dick.

"Just that! If he would go after them now, and make a pretence of making a general attack, the redcoats would surrender. I just told him so, and that was what we had words about. He said the British were still full of fight. I could make Burgoyne surrender inside of four hours!"

CHAPTER VII.

A MUTUAL SURPRISE.

Dick did not much doubt Arnold's statement.

The youth knew that Arnold was a fighter.

He had earned, and had been given the sobriquet of

"The Fighting General."

He would no doubt force Burgoyne to surrender, or make him fight to the last ditch.

That was Arnold's style.

Later on Arnold was guilty of the most heinous crime of which a man could be guilty in war times—that of being a traitor to his country and cause—but at the time of which we write he was high in the regards of Washington, was seemingly a patriot to the core, and was one of the best-liked generals in the army, as well as one of the fiercest fighters.

Dick looked at General Arnold with an air of interest.

"Then, if that is the case, there is not much use of me going as a spy into the British lines," said Dick, presently.

"As far as real use is concerned, there is none; but as General Gates is afraid, and will not attack until the British send word that they wish to surrender, it will be as well for you to go ahead with your project. I would be willing to wager a little something, however, that you find that what I have said is the truth."

"I hope so!"

"Oh, I am sure you will! If you succeed in over-hearing any talk between the British general and the members of his staff, you will hear them discussing the advisability of entering into negotiations with Gates with a view to surrendering."

"I certainly hope and trust that you are right, General Arnold!" said Dick.

The three conversed for some time, and at last the general rose and went to his quarters.

"Jove! Dick; if he was the commanding officer here, instead of Gates, the British would be in trouble in a hurry!" said Bob, when Arnold had gotten out of hearing.

"Indeed they would, Bob!"

"He's a fighter, all right!"

"Yes, if reports are true, and I guess they are."

"Oh, there is no doubt about that!"

The youths talked awhile longer.

Then they walked about the encampment and talked with the patriots.

Many of the soldiers were merely militia—farmer boys.

They could shoot, however, and shoot straight, and were formidable opponents on this account.

They had learned who Dick and Bob were.

General Arnold had told his officers, at the same time detailing some of the adventures of the youths; the officers had told others, and the stories soon went the rounds.

The youths were looked upon as great heroes.

They were asked many questions, and answered good-naturedly and modestly.

Had they had the least bit of egotism in their makeups, or been the least bit boastful, the youths could have easily made the soldiers think they were wonderful fellows, but they were neither egotistic nor boastful, and they laughed off any attempt made to make them out heroes.

They ate supper with General Arnold, at his request, and then Dick began making preparations for his intended trip into the lines of the British.

He asked General Arnold if there were any British uniforms to be had in the camp.

"I have several here in my tent," was the reply. "Do you wish one?"

"Yes," was the reply; "I think I will be safer and less likely to attract attention if I am disguised in a British uniform."

"That is reasonable to suppose. I have a uniform here that will just about fit you."

The general brought out three or four uniforms and selected one.

"Here it is," he said. "Try that on."

Dick took the uniform, and, doffing his own suit of citizen's clothes, donned the British red.

The clothing fitted him well.

"Looks as if it might have been made for him, eh?" remarked General Arnold, looking at Bob.

Bob nodded.

"That's right," he said.

"It will do splendidly," said Dick; "I shall feel quite safe, now."

"You make a fine-looking redcoat," laughed Arnold; "you will have to look out that you don't get shot before you get out of your own camp."

Dick laughed.

"I'll risk that," he said.

Dick waited till it was quite dark out, and then, shaking hands with Bob and the general, he took his departure.

He created some little excitement as he walked through the camp.

The soldiers at first thought he was a redcoat, sure enough, and the men around the first camp fire he came to leaped to their feet and seized their muskets.

"Hold! don't shoot!" laughed Dick. "I am one of you. I am Dick Slater, and am on my way to the British encampment to play the part of a spy."

"Oh, that's it, eh?" remarked one.

"We thought a redcoat had got into camp, and was going out again," said another.

Dick passed on.

He was soon outside the limits of the patriot encampment.

He knew where the pickets were stationed, and made his way out at a point where one was stationed.

Then he made his way in the direction of the British encampment.

He walked at a good pace for a few minutes.

Then he slowed down a bit.

He felt that he must soon come upon the British pickets.

So it was necessary that he should exercise caution.

Presently he came in sight of the camp fires in the British encampment.

Dick moved slower than ever now.

It was necessary that he should exercise all possible caution.

Dick was an expert at this kind of work, however.

No moccasined Indian could have moved forward with less noise than was made by the youth.

He must slip past the pickets without being discovered.

Should he fail of this, he would fail of his purpose, for it would be impossible for him to slip into the camp after an outcry had been raised.

He moved forward slowly and cautiously. Every few yards he would pause and listen. He had splendid hearing. He had developed this sense by exercising it a great deal. Presently he heard the sound of footsteps. "It is the sentinel!" thought Dick. He stood perfectly still and listened. The footsteps were approaching. "He is coming this way!" said Dick to himself; "I wonder if his beat extends this far?" He listened. Onward came the footsteps. Dick did not like the idea of hastening forward. He could have escaped the oncoming sentinel by doing so, but he feared that he might run into danger. He decided to remain where he was. It was very dark. It would be impossible for the sentinel to see him, unless he should run practically against him. Dick would see to it that the sentinel did not do this. Dick remained where he was. He listened closely. Nearer and nearer the sound of the footsteps came. Presently the sentinel was within a dozen feet of the youth, as Dick could tell by the sound of the footsteps. Dick was on the point of retreating a few paces. Just when he was about to do this, however, the sentinel came to a halt. "I guess he has come to the end of his beat," thought Dick; "I hope so, anyway!" He listened closely now. He wished to hear the sentinel's footsteps when he started again, and decide which way the fellow was headed. Dick hoped he would start back in the direction from which he had come. In that event, the youth would have a clear road into the British encampment. Presently the sentinel started again. On hearing the first two or three steps, Dick could not decide which way the fellow was headed. Then the sound grew slightly fainter, and he knew the sentinel was headed back in the direction from which he had come. "Good!" thought Dick; "now I am all right!" He stood still and waited till the sentinel was about twenty paces away. Then he stole silently forward toward the encampment of the British. He was very careful not to make any noise.

He must not be discovered. He must enter the camp without attracting attention. This would be a difficult matter. Dick had accomplished the same thing on a number of occasions, however. He believed he could do it again. As he drew nearer the encampment he moved more slowly. He took a careful survey of the situation. He worked his way around, until he was within fifty yards of one of the camp fires. He got a tent between himself and the camp fire. The tent threw out a deep shadow. It was a deep, black stripe, extending from the tent, where it was narrowest, to and into the outside darkness. Dick dropped upon his hands and knees. He crawled along this black stripe of darkness. He was completely hidden from the view of anyone who might have been near. This, of course, just suited Dick. He did not know how he would manage when he reached the tent. It was one thing at a time with him, however. He would make his way to the tent, and then make up his mind as to his method of procedure afterward. Dick never looked forward to find difficulties. He thought it sufficient to meet them when they were encountered. As he crawled cautiously along, he could hear the red-coats talking and occasionally laughing. Presently Dick reached the tent. He was now where he could not be seen. In so far as that was concerned, he was in a secure position, but now what should he do? How was he to manage to enter the camp and mingle with the soldiers? The camp fire was close to the tent. If he stepped around the side of the tent he would be in the light thrown out by the fire. He would be seen, and it would be noticed that he was a stranger. If he could succeed in getting into the camp, however, and in mingling with the soldiers before attention was attracted to him, the fact that he was a stranger would not be taken note of, as the soldiers did not know all the members of the army. But to get into the encampment without attracting attention would be the difficulty. Dick paused when he reached the tent, and pondered the situation.

What should he do now?

This was the question he asked himself.

It was a hard question to answer.

He wondered if the tent was occupied.

If it was not, and he could enter it, he might, by watching his chance, slip out through the front entrance without being noticed.

He placed his ear close to the ground, at the edge of the tent.

He listened intently.

He could hear nothing which would indicate that the tent was occupied.

"If there is anyone in there, he must be asleep," thought Dick.

He took hold of the canvas and lifted the cloth slightly.

He peered under the edge of the tent.

The interior was in more than semi-darkness, but not so dark but that the youth could see anyone who might be in there.

Dick looked all around carefully, searchingly.

There was a cot at one side.

There was nobody on the cot, however.

There was no one in the tent.

Of this Dick was certain.

He decided to enter the tent.

Once inside, he could take a look out through the entrance, and might soon get a chance to emerge without being seen.

To decide was to act.

Dick lifted the canvas still higher and started to crawl underneath it.

As he did so, and when he was about half way through, the entrance flap was suddenly pulled to one side, and a flood of light was admitted into the tent.

Then a soldier appeared in the entrance.

As he caught sight of Dick, he paused and stared at the youth in surprise.

Dick stared back.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE BRITISH CAMP.

It was the only thing, seemingly, that he could do.

The youth was taken wholly by surprise.

For once in his life he was at a loss to know what to do.

He felt confident that he was in for trouble.

He was discovered, and he believed that he would now have to flee for his life.

He hated to do this, too.

He had come for the purpose of spying on the British and if he fled, he would not be able to do the work.

The youth's mind worked swiftly.

The thought that something might turn up to make it possible for him to make a success of his work, even yet, caused him to hesitate and delay retreating, and attempting to escape.

The man who had come at such an inopportune time and discovered him, spoke:

"Well," he said, quietly, but sternly, "you are trying to steal something, are you?"

The accusation itself did not worry Dick.

It gave him an idea.

It gave him his cue.

The words proved that the redcoat did not suspect that Dick was a "rebel" and a spy.

His idea was that Dick was a British soldier like himself, but that he was endeavoring to sneak into the tent for the purpose of stealing something.

Dick was willing to be thought a would-be thief if it would enable him to effect an entrance into the British camp.

Dick decided on his course of action instantly.

He quickly pushed through, underneath the edge of the tent, and rose to his feet.

He faced the man defiantly.

"What do you mean by accusing me of trying to steal?" he asked.

"I mean just what I say."

The soldier stepped through the entrance and dropped the flap into place.

Dick was glad to see this.

He hoped the attention of the soldiers around the camp fire would not be attracted.

"A man isn't likely to steal from himself, is he?" asked Dick.

"What do you mean?" was the counter question.

"Just what I say."

"I can't say that I understand you. I will say, however, that I will give you just one minute in which to clear out of this tent!"

"You give me one minute in which to leave the tent?"

"Yes!"

Dick laughed in scorn.

"That is what I would call impudence!" he said.

"Impudence!"

Evidently the soldier was surprised.

"Yes, impudence."
 "I don't know what you mean by saying that."
 "You don't?"
 "No!"
 "Well, I do!"
 The soldier laughed in his turn.
 "I don't think you do!" he said; "you may think you do, but you will find that you are mistaken. Nothing that I have said could possibly be construed in such a manner as to make it appear to be impudence."
 "You think not?"
 "I am sure of it."
 "Well, I guess I can convince you to the contrary."
 "How?"
 "By asking you a question."
 "Ask it!"
 "Very well. Wouldn't you consider it impudence if some one was to enter your tent and tell you you were there for the purpose of trying to steal something?"
 "It certainly should."
 "Well, then, you know the reason why I consider that you are impudent."
 "But, my dear sir," the soldier said, "you are making a sad mistake!"
 "In what way?"
 "I'll ask you a question: Do you think you are in your own tent?"
 "Of course I am in my own tent!" was Dick's prompt reply.
 The other emitted a low whistle indicative of astonishment.
 "Well, well! here's a go!" he exclaimed.
 "What do you mean?"
 "Just what I say. Why, young man, you are away out of your reckoning, if you think this is your tent. It isn't!"
 "You say it isn't my tent?" remarked Dick, in a doubtful tone.
 "That is just what I say."
 "How do you know it isn't my tent?"
 "How do I know?"
 "Yes."
 "It's very simple. For the reason that I know it to be my tent."
 "Yours?"
 "Yes."
 "But—it can't be! This is certainly—"
 "My tent!" the soldier broke in; "it isn't yours!—but if it were, what explanation would you give for slipping into it from the rear?"
 Dick laughed.

"That is easy enough," he said; "I left without asking permission to do so."
 "Oh, I see!"
 "You understand, eh?"
 "Yes."
 "I thought you would. You've been through the same experience yourself, no doubt."
 "So I have; but how comes it that you have made a mistake in the tent?"
 "I don't think I have done so."
 "Oh, yes you have. This is my tent."
 "You are sure of that?"
 Dick pretended to be reluctant to believe that he was mistaken.
 "I am absolutely sure of it!"
 "Strange!" murmured Dick; "I must have approached the camp from the opposite side from what I thought. I don't see how I came to get turned around so completely."
 "Oh, that is not hard to do, in this outlandish region!"
 "You're right about that, I guess; well, I'm sorry, if I have caused you any inconvenience."
 "Oh, that's all right."
 The soldier then pulled the front flap aside, and opened the way for Dick to go out.
 "You might as well enter the encampment and make your way boldly to your tent," the man said.
 "I judge so," replied Dick.
 Then he stepped through the opening, and strode away. He pulled his hat down over his eyes, so as to hide his face pretty effectually.
 Some of the men seated near the camp fire looked at Dick in a surprised way as he walked away.
 "Who was that, Spencer?" he heard one ask, and he knew that the name of the man he had been talking to was Spencer.
 "I'm all right, now, I think," thought Dick; "Spencer will tell them the supposed joke on me, and they won't suspect."
 Dick did not look back, however.
 He walked briskly onward.
 As soon as he had succeeded in placing some little distance between himself and the tent in which he had had such a peculiar experience, Dick slackened his speed.
 He feared he would attract too much attention if he kept on walking at a rapid pace.
 He began strolling along, as if he had no particular business on hand.
 He kept a sharp lookout all around him.
 He was within the British encampment now, and he wished to begin the work of acquiring information.

Wherever he saw a group of redcoats engaged in conversation, he would manage to walk close up to them, and pause and listen to what they were saying.

He would turn his back toward them, and pretend to be looking at something in an interested manner.

But he was listening to every word that was being uttered.

Dick was an expert at this kind of work.

He had practiced it so much that he had become very efficient.

One thing Dick was on the lookout for in particular:

That was the headquarters of General Burgoyne, the British commander.

Dick felt that that was the place to go for information.

Of course, it would be difficult to spy around the headquarters, but Dick was the youth to risk doing it.

He kept working his way along.

Presently he came to a farmhouse.

He remembered having seen it from the hilltop that day.

He had thought at the time that in all likelihood it was used as headquarters by General Burgoyne.

This thought came back to him now.

He was sure he would find that he was right in thinking thus.

As Dick approached the house, he could see that there were lights burning in it.

This did not surprise him, as it was too early for the general and the members of his staff to be in bed.

"I wonder if it could be that they are holding a council of war?" thought Dick.

"That would be fortunate, in case I should be able to succeed in getting into the house and overhearing them," he mused.

Dick kept a wary eye out all around, as well as to watch the house.

He did not wish to be taken by surprise in any way.

He was afraid some curious-minded redcoats might take it into their heads to ask him some questions.

Of course, he might have been able to fool them, as he had fooled the fellow in whose tent he had been caught, but he did not wish to be bothered in any way.

"The best thing I can do is to get into that house at the earliest possible moment," thought Dick.

But how was he to do it?

There was no knowing how it was to be done.

Dick made up his mind to simply make an attempt.

He felt confident that he could manage it somehow.

He had encountered as difficult propositions as that more than once, he was sure.

He made his way slowly forward, till he was well within the shadow of the house.

The light from the camp fires did not now reach him.

This suited him splendidly.

He could now take his time, go slow and try to force an entrance into the house.

He made his way around the rear.

He felt that this would be the safest place for him to work.

There was one rear door.

There were also two windows.

Dick walked up to the door and tried it.

It was locked.

"It is probably bolted on the inside, too," the youth thought.

He next turned his attention to the windows.

He first tried the one on the righthand side.

It was tight and fast.

He could not budge it.

Then he tried the one on the lefthand side.

It was fastened down tightly, also.

"I'm afraid I am going to have a hard time getting in," the youth mused.

He stepped back and took a look at the end of the house.

The house was two stories in height.

There were two windows in the upstairs portion, the same as there was downstairs.

The trouble would be to get up to them.

"Then, after I got up there, they would probably turn out to be fastened, also," thought the youth.

He hardly knew what to do.

He happened to think that most houses had cellars.

And there was always a way to get up into the house out of the cellar.

He soon found that this house was no exception to the rule.

He found a window.

It was not fastened on the inside.

After some little work the youth managed to get the window open.

He peered through the window.

All was dark in the cellar.

He could see nothing.

The window was not large.

Dick thought he could crawl through it, however.

He decided to make the attempt, at any rate.

He began at once.

He found it hard work, and a tight squeeze.

He finally got through, however.

He had crawled through, feet foremost, so all he had to do was to drop to the ground.

This he did.

He did not make much noise.

He thought it best to be careful, however.

So he stood still and listened for a few minutes.

He heard nothing.

He began working his way around the side of the cellar.

He wished to find the steps leading upstairs, and he knew he would be able to do this by keeping close to the wall.

He turned two corners, and had made nearly half the circuit of the cellar when he found the steps.

"Ah, here they are!" the youth thought; "now I will see if I can get into the house proper."

He made his way slowly and carefully up the steps.

Presently he was at the top.

He felt around till he found the doorknob.

He turned the knob.

He pushed against the door.

It gave.

Dick was very careful.

He knew he was taking chances in pushing the door open.

There might be some one in the room to see him.

So he pushed the door very slowly and carefully open.

He had got the door perhaps an inch open, when he heard footsteps.

They sounded close at hand.

They were in the room into which the door opened.

They were approaching the door.

Dick supposed the person was about to open the door for the purpose of coming down into the cellar.

He made up his mind that he was to be discovered.

He did not see how he could help it.

He could not get back down the stairs quickly enough to escape being seen.

He made up his mind to seize the person, whoever it might be, and nerved himself for the feat.

When the person reached the door, however, he or she, instead of opening it, pushed it shut, remarking something about the wind.

Dick drew a long breath of relief.

"Well, well!" he exclaimed to himself; "I was scared about nothing! I am all right, after all. But how am I to get into the house without being seen?"

This was a difficult question.

Dick made up his mind that the person in the room would not be likely to stay in there the whole time.

He or she would likely leave the room, to go to some other room on some kind of an errand.

By listening closely, Dick was sure he would be able to know when this was done; and then he could slip out into the room, and manage to get away into some other part of the house before the person got back.

He would try it, at any rate.

Dick stood perfectly still and listened.

He heard the person moving here and there in the room.

He could hear the footsteps quite plainly.

Presently the steps began sounding fainter.

Then there was the sound of a door opening and closing.

Then the footsteps could be only faintly heard.

"Now is my time!" thought Dick.

He pushed the door open quickly, but as noiselessly as possible.

A quick glance into the room showed him that the room was not occupied at the moment.

He stepped through the doorway.

He closed the door and walked across the floor on his tip toes.

Reaching a door at the farther side of the room, Dick opened it.

He looked through the doorway.

A hall lay beyond.

The youth stuck his head through the doorway and looked down the hall.

It was dimly lighted by a solitary candle.

No one was in sight.

Dick stepped through the doorway.

He did so all the more promptly because he heard footsteps coming back in the direction of the room.

Dick closed the door, and just as he did so, he heard a door at the farther side of the room open.

He had got out just in time.

But he must get out of this hall.

He was in danger of being seen.

A quick, sweeping glance showed Dick the lay of the hall, the location of the stairway leading to the upper story, and he made his way to where the candle was and blew the light out.

This left the hall in complete darkness.

That suited Dick, however, much better than to have the light.

He would rather feel his way than to be in danger of being discovered.

He was engaged in very dangerous business.

Discovery and capture would mean almost certain death for him.

And the youth had no wish to end his days in such fashion.

He made his way slowly and carefully along the hall.

He presently reached the stairway.

He began making his way up it.

He thought it likely that General Burgoyne, if he was making the house his headquarters, would have a room upstairs.

The stairs creaked slightly, but not enough, he was sure, to attract attention.

Dick was careful not to make a noise.

Dick kept on up the stairs till he reached the landing.

Then he made his way along the hall, which, he saw, was just like the one below.

A candle was burning in this hall, the same as there had been downstairs, which enabled him to see.

After one quick survey, Dick made his way to where the candle was and extinguished it.

"I don't want very much light in my work!" thought Dick.

He stood still now for a few moments.

He listened intently.

He was sure he heard the murmur of voices.

He listened closely to see if he could locate the point from which the voices came.

It did not take him long to do this.

He moved along the hall.

He presently paused before a door.

A faint streak of light shone across the hall.

The light came through the keyhole in the door.

Dick could hear the murmur of voices quite plainly now.

He knew the sound came from the room before the door of which he was standing.

He could not understand anything that was said.

He was eager to do so, however.

He felt that if he could overhear what was being said in that room, he would learn much that would interest General Gates.

Dick dropped upon one knee beside the door.

He applied one eye to the keyhole and looked through.

He could see three men.

He believed there were more than that number in the room, but three was all he could see.

Dick had never seen General Burgoyne.

He had seen a number of great generals, however, both among the British and patriots, and he was sure that one of the men whom he saw was Burgoyne.

He took his eye away from the keyhole.

He placed his ear there.

He was enabled to hear and understand what was said. The British officers were indeed holding a council war.

Dick learned this very quickly.

He also discovered that what General Arnold had said was true.

The British officers were discussing the advisability of entering into communication with General Gates, with the view of surrendering.

"We are completely surrounded," said one of the officers; "we can neither advance nor retreat; we cannot cross the river; we are, in fact, in a trap, from which, so it seems to me, there is no possible chance of escape."

"It really looks as if what you say is only a statement of fact," said the officer whom Dick judged to be Burgoyne.

"Yes," said another; "if Gates was the fighter that Arnold is, he would speedily bring us to terms."

"That is certainly true, too," from another; "Gates has us at his mercy, if he but knew it."

"He will soon find it out," from still another. "To my way of thinking it would be good policy to make the first advances toward Gates; then we can make better terms than if we wait till it is patent to all that we have been forced to surrender."

The talk went on in this strain for some time.

Dick, as may be supposed, was greatly interested.

He listened to all that was said, and made mental notes.

General Burgoyne, Dick discerned, was averse to surrendering, or rather, of entering into negotiations tending to this step, until absolutely forced to do so.

"I am in favor of holding out as long as possible," said one; "it may be that Clinton may come up the river in time to help us escape from this trap into which we have fallen."

"That is possible, of course," said another; "but I should think that if Clinton was on his way up here, he would have sent a messenger to inform you of the fact before this."

"He may have done so," said Burgoyne; "and the rebels may have captured him."

"True; I never thought of that."

"I thought of it; and I am in favor of holding out till the last moment."

At this instant Dick sneezed.

The impulse came to him suddenly.

Doubtless he had stirred up some dust with his knee and it had got up his nose.

At any rate, the impulse came so suddenly, and was

ong that it was irresistible and Dick sneezed almost before he knew it.

CHAPTER IX.

DICK GETS AWAY.

Dick knew he was in for it, unless he got away from there in a hurry.

There was the sound of excited exclamations within the room.

Then the noise made by men leaping to their feet and moving chairs out of the way.

Then the sound of rushing footsteps.

But Dick was not to be caught so easily.

He had not delayed to learn what the action of the men would be.

He knew without waiting.

So he had hastened away immediately.

He ran down the hall.

He ran on his tiptoes, so as to make as little noise as possible.

He slowed up when he thought he had reached the vicinity of the landing at the head of the stairs.

He had to feel his way a few steps.

Presently he found the first step of the stairway.

He hastened down the stairs.

As he did so, he heard the door open.

He heard the rush of feet, as the officers came out of the room into the hall.

A cry went up from the officers.

"There he is!"

"Going down the stairs!"

"It's a spy!"

"Kill him!"

"Shoot him!"

But Dick was down the stairs so quickly as to be out of range before the men could possibly draw pistols and fire.

Dick realized that he was in great danger, however.

He might have difficulty in getting out of the house in time.

There would be no time to try any experiments.

He might have succeeded in getting out through the front door, but there was the chance that he might not—and he did not dare take the chance.

He decided to try to get out the same way he had gotten in.

He was quickly down the stairs.

He hastened along the hall, as well as he could in the dark, and soon succeeded in finding the door through which he had come from the kitchen.

There was no time to investigate, and see who was in the room.

Dick jerked the door open and leaped through into the room.

A woman was there, and as Dick leaped into the room, she uttered a scream.

Dick did not pause an instant.

He leaped across the room.

He jerked the door leading to the cellarway open, and bounded down the steps.

He ran quickly across the cellar.

He felt around a few moments and found a box.

This he placed under the window.

He leaped up on the top of the box, and began climbing through the window.

He heard the sound of steps on the cellar stairs.

He heard the sound of excited voices.

"They're coming!" Dick thought; "I'll have to hurry, or they will get me!"

He made all the haste possible.

The window was small, however, and it was impossible to get through it quickly.

In his haste, Dick got turned in such a way that he became wedged.

He struggled fiercely.

It would be terrible if he were to be captured after all. To be so near safety, and then fail of getting away, would be bad, indeed.

Dick struggled.

He made one last, almost despairing effort—for he heard the rushing feet of the officers, and thought they would surely reach him before he would succeed in getting loose—and found that his body was once more loosened.

He gave a quick, wriggling, lurching motion, and went through the window.

Something struck his bootheel as he did so.

Dick had no doubt it was a sword blade.

"Jove! that was a narrow escape!" the youth thought.

Then he leaped to his feet and darted away.

It was quite dark in the vicinity of the building.

So Dick felt comparatively safe.

"Now to get back to the patriot encampment!" thought Dick.

If he could get through the British lines, and reach the patriot encampment, all would be well.

General Gates would know what to do, if Dick could get

to him with the news of the manner in which the British regarded the situation.

Dick was determined to succeed in getting back through the British lines.

He knew it would be a difficult matter, for the reason that an alarm would be raised.

The pickets and sentinels would be warned to keep a sharp lookout for the "rebel" spy.

The youth realized that the quicker he got through the lines, the easier it would be to do so.

So he set out at as rapid a pace as it was safe for him to go.

He had to be very careful.

He was forced to bring into play all his skill as a woodsman.

He stole along with the noiselessness of an Indian on the trail of an enemy.

Even with all the care which he exercised, he came very near being detected two or three times.

He managed to escape discovery, however.

At last he was through the British lines.

When he was sure he had passed the last picket, Dick hastened forward at a more rapid pace.

Fifteen minutes later he was challenged by a patriot picket.

Dick had the countersign and gave it.

He then passed on through the lines.

He was soon in the camp of the division under General Arnold.

General Arnold and Bob were still up when Dick reached the general's quarters.

Both were delighted to see Dick back so soon, and alive as well.

"You made quick work of it, Dick!" exclaimed Bob.

"Did you get through the British lines?" asked Arnold, eagerly.

"Yes," replied Dick; "I got through all right."

"Did you learn anything?" eagerly.

"Yes, indeed!"

"What?"

"I discovered that what you told me before I started was true."

Arnold nodded.

"I thought you would!" he said.

"Did you get to see General Burgoyne, Dick?" asked Bob.

"Yes, and several of the members of his staff; and heard them talk, too."

Then Dick told what he had heard the British officers say.

Arnold was delighted.

"Good!" he said; "I knew it! I told Gates so; but he only got mad. He didn't want to attack the British until sure they were helpless. I guess that when you make your report he will be willing to get to work and try to do something before Clinton gets up here to interfere."

"The quicker he gets to work, the better it will be, he should judge, by what I heard to-night," said Dick.

"Yes, indeed! But, you see, Gates doesn't like me, and the mere fact of my having recommended that he make an attack on the British at once set him against it."

Dick hardly knew whether to go on and report to General Gates at once, or whether to wait till morning.

"You have had a hard enough time of it for to-night," said General Arnold; "there is no need of haste. Gates could do nothing before morning anyway, so you might as well wait till then. You can be up early and report to him then."

Dick decided to do this.

The general invited the youths to remain in his tent, and they accepted the invitation.

They were up bright and early next morning.

They went at once to the house occupied by General Gates.

He had just got up, the orderly said.

"Tell him that Dick Slater wishes to see him," said Dick.

The orderly was gone only a few minutes; then he returned and told the youths to come with him.

He conducted them to General Gates' private room.

The general greeted Dick eagerly.

"Did you enter the British encampment last night?" he asked.

"I did," replied Dick.

"And—did you learn anything?"

"I did."

Then Dick told what he had overheard the British general and the members of his staff say.

The general seemed both pleased and displeased.

"Did General Arnold say anything to you two young men about me?" he asked.

Dick shook his head.

"Nothing, sir," the youth replied.

Dick would not get the "Fighting General" in trouble by repeating what he had said.

General Gates was silent for a few moments.

He was pondering.

Then he looked up.

"You have done well!" he said; "you have rendered me great assistance, and I am much obliged to you for doing

"I shall speak of it in my message to General Washington, which you will take back with you when you go."

"There is no need of your doing so," said Dick, modestly; "I am always glad to be of benefit to the Cause, and desire no reward save the approval of my own conscience."

"Spoken like a brave youth!"

Then Gates was silent for a few moments, after which he spoke again.

"I suppose you would like to remain and see whether not Burgoyne surrenders, so as to bear the news to the commander-in-chief?" he asked.

"Yes, we would like to stay," replied Dick; "and if there is anything we can do, we shall be only too glad to do it."

"Very well; I shall begin the attack on the British this morning, and force them to make terms at the earliest possible moment. If anything should come up, wherein I think I could use you, I will let you know."

"Very well, sir."

Then the youths left the room and the house, and went in search of their breakfast.

CHAPTER X.

THE "SARATOGA CONVENTION."

There was considerable excitement in the patriot ranks when it was learned that an immediate attack was to be made on the British.

A great many of the patriot soldiers were new recruits, men who had never been in battle.

Therefore, the thought of engaging in a battle was a matter sufficient to excite them.

The old veterans expressed considerable satisfaction.

"Gates had done the right thing at last!" they said.

Arnold was delighted, also.

He was essentially a fighter, and was never so happy as when the prospects of engaging in a battle were good.

Soon after breakfast the attack was begun.

It was not a fierce attack, but the patriots simply went to work in a quiet, steady way, as if determined to keep it up for a considerable period.

The British replied as well as they could, but they could do no particular harm.

Still, they were in such numbers that if attacked and engaged in a hand-to-hand encounter, they would have been dangerous.

It was better to remain off, and keep harassing them with large and small shot.

The British stood this all day long without making any signs toward surrendering.

When the sun went down the firing ceased.

Gates knew the British could not get away, so could afford to take it easy.

Soon after nightfall, a party of patriots brought in a prisoner.

He was suspected of being a British messenger.

He had been caught while trying to sneak through the patriot lines.

He was taken before General Gates.

"He is undoubtedly a British spy and messenger," one of the patriot soldiers said; "after we had captured him, he stuck something in his mouth and swallowed it. It was a message, no doubt."

This interested General Gates.

"Give the fellow an emetic!" he ordered.

This was done.

The poor captive became very sick, and "heaved up Jonah" at a great rate.

A little silver bullet, oblong in shape, was found.

It was hinged in the middle, and was held together with a tiny screw.

This screw was removed, and the bullet was opened.

A message was found.

It was written on thin paper, and was from General Clinton, the British commander, who had been stationed at New York.

The message was to General Burgoyne.

It stated that Clinton had captured the forts down the river, and that he, with three thousand men, was on his way up to aid Burgoyne.

This was news indeed!

Gates felt that it was fortunate that the messenger had been captured.

Had he reached Burgoyne, that officer would have held out to the very last.

As it was, General Gates felt sure that Burgoyne would surrender soon.

The attack was resumed in the morning, and it was kept up until the morning of the thirteenth of the month, when Burgoyne held a council of war.

He asked the members of his staff what they should do?

A vote was taken, and it was decided to enter into negotiations with General Gates.

As soon as it had been decided to do this, a soldier carrying a white flag was sent out toward the patriot lines.

The patriots at once stopped firing.

An officer went forward to meet the British soldier.

As soon as he learned what it was that was wanted, he returned and reported to General Gates.

Negotiations were at once entered into.

Burgoyne asked on what terms the surrender would be received.

Gates sent back word that he demanded the unconditional surrender of the British army.

General Burgoyne refused to surrender under such conditions.

Then Gates called a council of war.

He told the officers that as they knew that Clinton was coming up the river with three thousand men, he thought it would be wise to temporize, and allow the British some concessions.

General Arnold was not for doing this, as he said that three thousand men still fifty miles distant, could not do much harm, there being at least twenty thousand of the patriot soldiers.

He was in the minority, however, the majority of the officers siding with Gates; so it was decided to make terms.

Negotiations were continued then, and after three days of this, the terms were agreed upon.

The terms were that the British soldiers should march out of their camp with the honors of war, and pile their weapons in an open field. Then they should be allowed to march across country to Boston, from which point they were to sail for England. None of them were to serve in the army against the patriots, again during the continuance of the war. The officers were to keep their small arms, and their personal luggage was not to be searched.

At Burgoyne's request, the surrender was to be styled a "Convention." It may be remarked in passing that the surrender is always referred to by British historians as "The Saratoga Convention."

But it doesn't matter now, and it didn't matter then; it was a surrender just the same, no matter what they called it.

On the seventeenth day of the month, the British soldiers marched into the field by the river and laid down their arms.

The patriot soldiers showed a delicacy of feeling quite unexpected by the British.

They stayed back within their lines, and were not present to add to the humiliation of the British by looking on.

And when the disarmed soldiers marched past the patriot soldiers no disrespectful or insulting remarks were made; nothing was said or done that might hurt the feelings of the enemy.

When the British and patriot officers met, General Burgoyne stepped forward and handed his sword to General Gates, with the remark, "The fortunes of war, General Gates, has made me your prisoner."

General Gates accepted the sword, and immediately handed it back, with the remark, "I shall always be ready to testify that it has not been through any fault of your excellency."

The surrender of the British at Saratoga was a great blow to the British, and a great triumph for the patriots.

And although Dick Slater himself refused to take any credit to himself, General Gates and others insisted on affirming that the fact that Dick had entered the British lines and learned that the British were on the point of entering into negotiations had assisted materially, as it made General Gates feel confident, and caused him to keep up the attack steadily, when otherwise he might not have done so.

THE END.

The next number (26) of "The Liberty Boys of '76" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS' CLEVER TRICK OR, TEACHING THE REDCOATS A THING OR TWO," by Harry Moore.

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